



# A DISCOURSE

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## 'G O D's Hearing Prayer,

Grounded from the following Words,

*Now we know that God heareth not Sinners, but if any Man be a Worshipper of God and doth his Will, him he Heareth, John 9. 31.*

**T**H E Right End of setting aside a Particular Day for Publick and National Fasting and Humiliation, is to *Seek the Lord* yet more diligently and earnestly, if peradventure He may be Entreated and we Accepted of by him. *For who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord, Jer. 30. 21.* Which is an emphatical kind of Expression, and doth import thus much, That though all the Time and Days here on Earth are lent unto us to Understand and Seek after the Lord. *Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord: His going forth is prepared as the Morning, Hos. 6. 3.* And therefore one Morning after another we should know and apprehend yet more of the Lord. As every day we make nearer approaches to the things unseen, so we should be in a Preparation of further Knowledge and Discovery of them. But besides this constant Seeking of the Lord and of the things of his Kingdom, it hath been the Way and Method of his Saints and Servants in the former Generations and in the several Countries of the Earth to appropriate and set apart some Particular and Set Times more than others for the more Solemn and Earnest Calling on the Lord, and for the Seeking of his Face. This was more especially when they had a Belief and Apprehension that the Lord was Displeased with the Inhabitants of the Earth, which he manifested by sending his

Judgments

Judgments upon them, and also upon an Apprehension of some near and imminent Danger.

The Apostle doth give that Character of the Jews, *That they are Beloved for their Fathers Sake*, Rom. 11. 28. And without all doubt according to that Dispensation that then was many of them Worshipped God according to his Will, were accepted by him, and he was well pleased with them; which he did thereby shew forth and manifest, because he had his Prophets among them. And our Saviour Christ doth expressly say that *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets are in the Kingdom of God*. Now these did for their Time and Generation direct the People which way they should Worship; and their Writings are left to direct us also upon whom the Ends of the World are come. This Observation : make to shew how that we often Read how the Children of Israel did severall times observe National Fasts. At Mispheh, they poured out Tears by Bucketfulls. So when News was brought to Godly Jehoshaphat, *There cometh against thee a great Multitude from beyond the Sea, and Jehoshaphat feared and set himself to seek the Lord and Proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah and Judah Gathered themselves together to ask help of the Lord; even out of all the Cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord*. 2. Chron. 20. 2, 3, 4. I wish it could now be likewise said That out of all the Houses of this Town and Neighbourhood they would come to seek the Lord and hear his Word, as they did out of all the Cities of Judah : But People are not altogether so zealous and fervent in Spirit as in former times. So Ezra would *Eat no Bread and Drink no Water; for he mourned because of the Transgression of them that had been carried away*. Ezra 10. 6. And so we Read in *Esth.* 3. 18. and 4. 16. When there was an intention and design to destroy, and to cause to Perish all Jews, *Esther* who was the chief of them and Wife to King *Ahasuerus*, appointed that they should Fast, and neither Eat nor Drink three Days, Night or Day. As we Read afterwards in the Sequel of the Story, both *Jehoshaphat's* National Fast, and *Esther's* National Fast were of good Effect; for the Lord did preserve them from the Intended Destruction. The like we Read in the Third of *Jonah*, who when he came to Nineveh and began to enter a Days Journey, and Cried and said, as ye may Read *Jonah* 3. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. *So the People of Nineveh believed God and Proclaimed a Fast — But let Man and Beast be covered with Sack-cloth, and cry mightily unto God : Yea, Let them turn every one from his Evil Way, and from the Violence that is in their Hands*. What he means here, *Let Man and Beast cry mightily unto God*, I know not, unless he would by that kind of Expression comprehend all sorts of Men, both the more Reasonable and Brutish Men (which is *Ezekiel's* Phrase) those Beasts in Humane Shape, which for want of Use have almost lost the Knowledge of

Good and Evil and Sence of God. These are here required to rub up again those faculties and powers of Knowledge and Reason, which before lay dead or asleep in them. But it hath been Observed that Man is only a Religious Creature, for other Beasts have some little Semblances and outward Shews of Reason, but none at all of Religion. Yet when I read in *Psal.* 104. 25, 27. *That Creeping Things Innumerable, both Small and Great Beasts, these all wait upon thee that thou mayest give them Meat in due Season; He giveth to the Beasts his Food, and to the Young Ravens which Cry,* *Psal.* 147. 9. As God doth certainly take care of them, so there may be in them also a secret and inward Instinct towards their Creator, as our selves do find that our Knowledge and Reason do much more incline towards him that is Invisible then as we yet throughly know and are aware of. So that there may not be altogether so much Impropriety in that Expression of the King of *Nineveh* taken literally, as some may at first Imagine. It is certain that therein he spoke according to the Principles and Dictates of Natural Religion. But most certainly there is Excellent Sense and Significancy in the latter part of this Eighth Verse. *Yea,* (which Particle signifies rather) *Let every one turn from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.* This is Paralel and agrees to the Words of our Text, *If any Man be a Worshipper of God and doth his will, him he heareth.* For there to the crying mightily to God, it is immediately subjoyned and annexed: *Yea, let them turn every one from his evil way and from the violence that is in their hands.* There is better Divinity in this one saying of the Heathen King of *Nineveh* than is to be heard from Thousands of Bishops and Priests, and other Teachers and Preachers at this day; for they do stick in the outward Observation of the thing. They are very exact and punctual to go according to the Form and Lines made ready to their hands; but they do not understand, or at least they are not Guided by the things signified thereby. For this is the Right Nature and Intent of a Fast, not only to cry mightily unto God with the outward Voice, or to take with them such and such Words of Course: Nor yet to make longer Prayers and Preaching on this day than at other times. I do not hereby absolutely speak against or condemn them. But yea, that is Rather, let this Word also be Obeyed, *Let them turn every one from his evil way and from the violence that is in their hands.* Thy Heart and Conscience knows what hath been, or what is thy Evil Way: As my own Heart and Conscience doth know what hath been, or what is my Evil Way. But both thou and I do dissemble and not keep the Fast, if each of us do not turn from our Evil Way. For if we would have the Sure Mercies of *David*, and be where *David* is, we must do as he did, *I kept my self from mine Iniquity,* *Psal.* 18 22. And so likewise it must be from the Violence that is in any of our hands.

And God said unto Noah, *The end of all Flesh is come before me, for the Earth is filled with Violence throughout them, and I will destroy them with the Earth*, Gen. 6. 13. from which Verse we see and learn that Destruction is the Punishment annexed and consequent to Violence. Now Fasting being in order to Prevent and Turn away Destruction it is necessary that every man should turn from the Violence that is in his hands, or otherwise outward Fasting will not do. This the King of Nineveh knew right well. O when shall the Earth that even to this Day is filled with Violence, thus keep a Fast unto the Lord, as for every Inhabitant thereof High and Low to turn from the Violence of his hands. Then there would be no Destroying Sword, nor should the Waters of the Blood of its Inhabitants any more cover the Earth. And when the Souldiers demanded of John, saying, *And what shall we doe?* And He said unto them, *Doe Violence to no Man*. Luke 3. 14. But as it is one of the hardest things in Christianity in Common Practice, not to Recompence Evil for Evil or not to doe Evil unto them who would do Evil unto us. So it is hard and seldom used in War to stand only on the defensive Part, and to doe Violence to no man. Not to use cruelty and severity towards those Enemies who would use cruelty and severity unto us, if they had us in their Power. As for Example, It is too much known that the Natural Born *Irish* are sufficiently Cruel, Barbarous and destructive, Witness their Massacres, Murders and Horrid doings in the Year 1639. and it hath been since seen that *the Blood of thy Servants which they shed* Psal. 79. 10. hath been revenged upon them even to the Second Generation; for they had at long run the worst of that War also which themselves at first begun. And so it is known fresh to our Memories that within these few Years last Past, as we have heard with our Ears and it hath been told unto us how they have been Slaughtered in Great Numbers. And I have heard from one that had it from an Eye Witness that in the last Battel which was fought there, when the *Irish* were Overcome those Poor Creatures would fall down upon their knees and cry out in a Pitiful manner for Quarter in the midst and heat of Battel; but they were knocked down, and thrust through, and shot for all: Even according as is the usual method and they say Agreeable with the Law of Arms when any besieged City is taken by storm or when any Enemy is found in the Place of Battle; Because they say those Persons would doe the very same or like to them if they had Overcame them, or had them in their Power in like manner. And so according to *Lex talionis* or the Law of Requital they are as it were Necessitated to this kind of severity. But whether or no this kind of doing be not some Part of that *Violence* which hath filled the Earth at this day, or whether it is not the same which was forbidden to Souldiers by his Servant John Baptist (for it is Probable that He Reproved and forbad that which they



they were Addicted and Given unto at that day ) God is Judge himself thereof more then any knowledge of Man can now determine.

For my Part I should not care, to have the least, nor yet any hand in such kind of VVork, as is Cruelty or Destruction to my fellow Creatures. For I am one of those Witnesses in the VVorld that have *learned War no more*. And according to the knowledge given mee and that Understanding out of the VVord of God, I have from thence testified unto the Nations that these VVars and Fightings are Unlawful and Unchristian of both sides. For they come from *Mens Lusts*. James 4. 1. which Lusts are certainly Unlawful and Unchristian. I have from the Scriptures of Truth, Pointed out the only True and Right way to Peace. It is in Psal. 72. 3 *The Mountains shall bring Peace to the People and the little Hills by Righteousness*. As when we ask the VVay upon a Road VVee are shewed such a Path or Tract, and they Give us for Direction, that we must goe by such an House or Village or remarkable Place, so the Holy Ghost hereby doth signify that the Way to Peace is by Righteousness. *The Mountains shall bring Peace to the People, and the little Hills by Righteousness*. Which will be fulfilled when the Highest Sort of People there expressed by Mountains, and the Lowest sort there expressed by little Hills, shall every one of them Fear the Lord, from the Greatest to the Least, so as to doe according to what God requires of Man, *To doe justly, and to love Mercy* (what a Godlike thing is this) *and so walk Humbly with thy God* Micah 6.8. When I Read or hear of Battles and Victories, sometimes one hath the better of it and sometimes another; I look into the Glass of the VVord of God, and there I see it thus written, *Because the Lord God of your Fathers was wroth with judah He hath delivered them into your hand, and ye have slain them in a rage that reacheth up unto Heaven. And now ye Purpose to keep under the Children of Judah and Jerusalem for Bondmen and Bondwomen unto you, But are there not with you, even with you Sins, against the Lord your God,* 2Chron. 28. 9, 10. This was in a civil VVar between Israel and Judah; and the same Reason holds between Nation and Nation, because the Lord God of your Fathers was wroth with the *French* and with the *Irish*, He hath delivered them into your hands and ye have slain them in a rage that reacheth up unto Heaven. But are there not with you, *Englishmen*, even with you Sins against the Lord our God? Truly there are with us, even with us *Englishmen*, Sins against the Lord our God; which the Present Rulers doe suppose and acknowledge in the General, By appointing this day of Publick Fasting and Humiliation for the same. My hearts Desire and Prayer unto God, is that himself would make known How He is the *God of all the Families of the Earth*. All the Creatures are his. And though Country is divided from Country by Rocks, Seas and Bounds, Yet these

these are but several Rooms of the same his Barth, as there are several intermixed Hurdles in a Sheepfold, where are all Sheep. And so Men and VWomen, Our Fellow Creatures, who were made in the Image of God, doe Inhabit other Countreys: O that therefore the whole Earth were once so that wee should be harmless and inoffensive one to another; that it may be fulfilled and seen, *Then shall the Lambs feed after their manner.* Isa. 5. 17. *They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my Holy Mountain for the Barth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the Waters cover the Sea,* Isa. 11. 9. Certain it is, As wee have Compassion and Mercy to our fellow Creatures; and as every one of us doe turn from the Evil of his VVays and from the Violence of his Hands, wee come nearer and closer to the Mind and VVill of God (*if a Man is a Worshipper of God and doth his VVill, him be heareth*) and wee keep the Fast so much the more acceptable to the Lord according to Isa. 58. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, which the Reader may see at large in the Bible, *Is not this the Fast that I have chosen, to loose the Bands of Wickedness?* &c.

To discourse these things in the General is sutable Enough to National Fasting and Humiliation. Which is therefore observed that Prayer and Supplication be made by all the People of this Land to be Preserved from Forreign Enemies; and that every Man may know the *Plague of his own Heart*, In order to get out, Be healed and Recovered from the same. For in vain are all the Acts of Religion and VVorship till this be done. The Living in any known and reserved Sin doth denominate a Man or VVoman a Sinner; nor yet is it sufficient to goe on in a Perfunctory and Hasty course of Life and then they say, they live in no Sin, Because they will not know, search and discover it; for every one should seek to know the Plague of his own Heart, make Prayer unto God, and also search and try his own Ways, whither there be any Sin or not in him. For it is not here according to what Ignorant and Presumptuous Sinners would Imagine, but as the Lord will judge at the last Day. For as he said to Sarah, *I will certainly return unto thee according to the Time of Life.* Gen 18. 10. So he will certainly judge every one of us according to such a Time of Life and according to such a Time of Life. For according as wee lived in Sin or not lived in Sin, *He will Remember all our Offerings and accept our Burnt Sacrifice.* Selah. *The Lord fulfill all thy Petitions.* Psal. 20. 3, 4. And all our other things pertaining to Religion and Worshop, which wee have done in order to him throughout our Life; or he will not accept thereof: which affirmation of Eternal and Immutable Truth is Grounded upon those words of our Text. *Now wee know that God not Sinners; but if any Man be a Worshipper of God, and doth his will him be heareth.*

These were the words of him that was Born blind and Restored to Sight by Jesus Christ. Now it is true that every saying of a

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 meer Man, as this Blind Man was, only because it is recorded in Scripture, is not therefore of Divine Inspiration, nor of Equal Authority and Truth to what Moses and the Prophets, Christ and his Evangelists and Apostles spake and delivered. For these were moved immediately by the Holy Ghost and spake as that Gave them Utterance, and had received the Spirit which should direct them into all Truth. But the sayings of false Prophets. 2 Kings 22. 6, 11. are Registered in Scripture, and so what the Serpent and the Devil spake. Other things are there Recorded, which were the Discourses of Common People. Some whereof were Good Moral and Honest sayings; and others were spoken according to what other Men and Women usually doe. And thereupon it is a Rule that wee are to receive it for true or false according to the Person speaking, and according to the Particular subject matter there spoken off. But this expreſſion of the Blind Man which wee have chosen for our text, is to be received and embraced for a certain and Divine Truth; Because there are other Places of Undoubted Scripture, which confirm the same Word. For wee have no less Persons then David (*By whom the Spirit of the Lord spake and his Word was in his Tongue.* 2 Sam. 23. 2.) and the Son of God himself, even Jesus Christ, Witnessing and affirming the very same in the two Branches of our text. And first that God heareth not Sinners, Wee have the Holy Ghost speaking by the Mouth of David on this wise, *If I regard iniquity in my Heart, the Lord will not hear mee.* Psal. 66. 18. and whereas he goes on to add in the very next verse, *But verily God hath heard mee, he hath attended to the Voice of my Prayer.* Why this again confirms the latter Part of our text, *If any Man be a Worshipper of God and do his will, him he heareth.* For it is manifest by the History of the Bible that David was a Worshipper of God; and further, *He was a man after Gods own Heart,* who did fulfill his Pleasure and doe his Will. And so our Saviour Jesus Christ doth confirm the Truth of our Text, if not in the very same expreſs Words as that is in, yet it is to the very same Signification, *Not every one that saith unto mee Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in Heaven.* The first part of which Proposition, *not every one that saith unto mee Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven,* Answers and agrees unto, and Proves the Words of my Text, *God beareth not Sinners* as it is afterwards said, for many will say to me, Lord, Lord, who have been Workers of Iniquity. Verse 22. but that will not avail them so far as for God to hear them and to bring them to his Holy Place. For as several Sinners and Transgressors doe make outward Prayers in their Life Time unto God, so when they come to die, and their Souls doe live after that, they would as willingly goe to Heaven as other People, knowing if they be not admitted there, they shall be sent unto a worse Place and that is very True.

For

For as Balaam said, *Behold I have Received Commandment to Bless, and he hath Blessed and I cannot Reverse it.* Numbers 23. 20. So here it is, The Order and Decree of God stands on this wise, *Thou shalt Guide mee with thy Counsel and afterward receive mee to Glory.* Psal. 73. 24. so that there is no being received up unto Glory without being first Guided by Gods Counsel, that is, his written Word, and the Motions and dictates of his Spirit. There is no going to Heaven without afore doing the will of our Father which is in Heaven. All the Ministers, Servants and Creatures of God in the whole World, cannot Reverse this Commandment and Purpose of God. And so it runs in the affirmative, He that doth the will of my Father which is in Heaven, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. This is the very same with the last Part of my Text, *If any Man be a Worshipper of God and doth his will, Him he Heareth.*

*In the Mouth of two or three Witnesses every Word shall be Established* and here two true and faithful Witnesses, viz. David and Christ give attestation and confirmation to the same. It doth thereupon become as Authentick a text and as Immediate a Divine Truth, as any other in the Bible. He that was born blind and Restored to his sight did hit on the Right of it in this his saying. Nay rather, It was not so much his own Peculiar saying as a common received maxim of Truth amongst the Jews and Servants of God in those Days. Which appears by that kind of Introductory speech, *Now we know,* as is usual in common speaking among us, we know it is so and so. It is obvious and lies within every bodies Observation and Knowledge. Who knows not such things as these? Nay we might bring in a third Witness of God to confirm and Establish this same Word, for this Truth and Observation was as Old as Isaiah his Time, who saith by the Spirit, *When ye make many Prayers, I will not hear, Your Hands are full of Blood.* And then he afterwards advises them *to cease to do Evil* (for as long as they did Evil, God would not hear their Prayers) *learn to do well; come now let us reason together, saith the Lord,* Isa. 1. 18. Thereby he gives us to understand that then God will hear and be Intreated, even to pardon and forgive; *though their Sins be as Scarlet, of a deep Dye and Contamination, they shall be as white as Snow,* which is an Emblem of Innocency. *Though they be red like Crimson, they shall be as Wool.* Whatever hurt they did formerly, they shall cease to hurt; for Wool hurts none, but warms and cherishes. All this is to the very same purpose and signification, and so is *Isaiah* 1. throughout, That as long as People are Sinners God heareth them not; *But if any Man be a worshipper of God, and doth his will, him he heareth.*

The Text naturally divideth it self into two Branches, the first by way of Negation, *God heareth not Sinners;* and the latter by way of Affirmation, *If any man be a worshipper of God, and doth his will, him he*

he beareth. There is no need to change, alter or vary the Words to make up the Doctrine, or Doctrines of our present intended Sermon; but take and treat of them in their own Words, in the very order as they lie.

The first Doctrine is, *That God beareth not Sinners*: The second is, *If a man be a worshipper of God, and doth his will, him he beareth*. There is no need of any Interpretation or Exposition; for the words are very plain and easy, That he that Runneth may Read, and he that Heareth may Understand.

*God beareth not Sinners*. What kind of saying is this? For there is not a Word in my Tongue, but Lord, thou knowest it altogether. When Hannah Prayed and spake in her Heart, 1 Sam. i. God did hear this Mental kind of Prayer all one as what is uttered forth with the outward Voice, and accordingly it there so came to pass that the God of Israel granted to her the Petition that she asked of him. As also this will help us to apprehend what it is that the Psalmist Prays so often for, *Hear my Prayer, O Lord, and let my Cry come unto thee*; and so Hezekiah Prays, *Lord, Bow down thine Ear and hear*, 2 Kings 19. 16. This very Phrase of Speech is above a hundred times in Scripture, *That God will hear*, and sometimes it is said, *God will not hear*. Not but that God hears all things, and knows all things. But then it is that God hears the Prayers of his Servants and People, when he doth grant and fulfil their Petitions according to what they had asked of him. And then he is said *not to hear*, when he will not grant, nor yet fulfil the Petitions of such or such Creatures, Men and Women. Neither will he accept of the things they do in order to him. There are many Examples and Instances of this both Ways. And Jesus lift up his Eyes, and said, *Father I thank thee that thou hast heard me*; and *I know that thou bearest me always*. God heard him always, because he was the Holy One, and in him was no Sin; But none of his other Servants had that Priviledge as to be heard always, but this was the Priviledge of the Son only. *Who in the Days of his Flesh, when he had offered up Prayers and Supplications with strong Crying and Tears was heard in that he feared*, Heb. 5. 7. This again Illustrates the same. As also it doth teach us that the way for God to hear us, is by Obedience, Holiness and Fearing of his Name.

I have sometimes thought that all Scripture doth hang like Birdlime together; for it is all of a Piece, and it all agrees, and is connect together as pertaining to the same things, as indeed so it doth, as to what we are now handling. *That God will hear such as do his will, but not Sinners*. This appears from all those places aforequoted, as also from Micah 3. 4. *Then shall they cry unto the Lord, but he will not hear them. He will hide his Face from them even at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings*. Mark this

last;

last ; for what can be more full, exprefs or pertinent to the matter we are Treating of. *They are turned back to the Iniquities of their Fore-fathers, which refused to hear my Words* (from whence Note by the way that Refusal to hear the Word of God is a Sin and Iniquity ; Yea, and a very great one too) *and they went after other Gods to serve them, the House of Israel and the House of Judah have broken my Covenant which I made with their Fathers. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold I will bring Evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape, and when they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them,* Jer. 11. 10, 11. The *Latinus* put a difference and diverſity between *Audire* and *Auſcultari*. The firſt ſignifies to hear, and the latter to hearken ; and we know that we have a common Proverbial Speech, *Such an one hears, but he doth not hearken.* And ſo God hears all things. He hears the Mumbling of the Papiſts over their Reads. He hears the much *Speaking of the Heathen*, as alſo the Superſtition of the *Jew* and *Mahometan*. And ſo he doth hear the ſeveral Devotions, Worſhips, Rights or Manners of Religion in all Nations and People under the Sun, But he doth not hearken unto them. For ſetting aſide thoſe only who do his Will, and Worſhip him *in Spirit and in Truth, for the Father ſeeketh ſuch to Worſhip him,* and is heard of them. But all the other Worſhippers on the face of the Earth he minds and regards no more than we do, the Gaggling of Geefe, or the Chirping of Birds, which we are forced to hear whether we will or not. Or than the Barking of a Dog, as we commonly ſay. Which laſt comes near to the Phraſe and Compariſon of the Holy Ghoſt, *He that Sacrificeth a Lamb is as if he cut off a Dogs Neck,* Iſa. 66. 3. There is little in that ; and even in their beſt Religious Acts and Performances there is little or nothing at all, as to God's Acceptation and Account, as ſome of them will be imputed to be as bad as *Idolatry* and *Murther*, as we gather from the ſame Verſe. If God did hear only by the hearing of the Ear, our Voice how loud ſoever would not reach up unto Heaven ; and the God of *Iſrael* neither Slumbers nor Sleeps ; nor yet is he afar off, for he fills Heaven and Earth, ſo there is no need to cry aloud to reach unto him ; but if any are Obſtreperous and Noiſy in their Worſhip, whether it be out of Ignorance of the Nature of God who knows all things, even the *whiſperings of Ariel out of the Duſt*, all one as what is ſpoken out ; or rather if they do ſo out of their earneſtneſs and deſire to have their Prayers heard and granted : Yet, *as a little Leaven Leaveneth the whole Lump,* ſo if there be any Sin and Tranſgreſſion Intermixed with, or in the Worſhipper, then what God ſaith by *Ezekiel* pertaineth to ſuch, *Though they Cry in my Ears with a loud Voice, yet I will not hear them,* Ezek. 8. 18. *Then ſhall they call upon me, but I will not answer ; they ſhall ſeek me early, but they ſhall not find me,* Prov. 1. 28. This

s said as to those *Sinners and Simple Ones and Scorners*; and *Fools* mentioned Verses 10, 22. of this same Chapter. Yea the whole doth Illustrate and Confirm the Point in hand; as also many Terrible Things are here spoken against the non hearers of the Word, who set at nought all God's Counsel, and would none of his Reproof, in Verses 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31. As on the one side, the effectual fervent Prayer of a Righteous Man availeth much, so if there be any Fornicator or Prophane Person as *Esau*, or a Despiser of God and of his Word, when afterwards, last Sickness, Death, or Future Punishment draws towards, and is just seizing upon them, they will find no place for Repentance, though they seek for it carefully with Tears. In this place of the *Proverbs* it is said, *Though they cry with a loud Voice* (whereby is set forth the utmost Earnestness and Anguish of Spirit) *he will not be heard by them.* It was said in the beginning of our Discourse, that the intent of Fasting was to seek the Lord yet more Earnestly. Now suppose that such kind of Sinners and Transgressors should observe a Fast for this end, To engage the Lord yet more to hear them, yet we have the Wisdom and Mind of God speaking to them on this wise, *When they Fast I will not hear their Cry; and when they offer Burnt-offering and an Oblation I will not accept them; but I will Consume them by the Sword, and by the Famine, and by the Pestilence.* Jer. 14. 12. Truly, this last Scripture doth run and weigh very much in my mind; Because at this day is the latter part thereof fulfilled in your Ears, Luke 4. 21. For ye have heard that several Hundreds and Thoulands have been Consumed by the Sword and by the Famine, and by one Pestilence in the Neighbouring Countries; and these Nations are joyned and concerned in the same. For several chosen Men of *England* have also lost their Lives in the Wars. And though perhaps ye think there hath not been that Famine and Plague, yet by reason of unwholesome Victuals, unwholesome Air, Coldness and Wet, which Numerous Armies are forced to meet withall. There hath been that *Consuming Sickness* among them, that by Relation almost as many have died of that in the Flower of their Age, as the Sword or other Instruments of War have Devoured and immediately Destroyed. So that as to them it hath been equivalent to the Famine or Pestilence it self; for they can but Destroy, and the like hath happened to them. So that by the Truth of one part thereof which we see evident before our Eyes, It is a Sign and Token that God will not accept of their other Acts of Religion and Worship at the last day. But as he saith Jer. 14. 10. *He will now Remember their Iniquity and Visit their Sins.* So it may be seen when the day of Judgment is present, as now is the day of Probation and Trial in this Wilderness of the Earth. VVe are not absolutely Sure that this National Fast will gain acceptance

with the Lord as to the whole Nation, and every Inhabitant thereof; though the right Observance of it may do good to each Person that walketh uprightly; that doth actually turn from the Evil of his way; and from the Violence that is in their hands: So much may be believed and understood from the Scriptures that it will be available to none else.

O Lord, to us belongeth Confusion of Face, &c. and so on, as it is Dan. 9. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14. The Time of Hardening and the Day of Provocation goeth away. And we learn from Jer. 14. 12. and also from what is written of Levi, he said, Bless Lord his Substance, and accept the Work of his hands, Deut. 33. 8, 11. Remember all thy Offerings, and accept thy Burnt Sacrifice, Selah, Psal. 20. 3. They shall come up with acceptance on mine Altar, Isa. 60. 7. For in mine Holy Mountain, the Mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord God, there shall all the House of Israel, all of them in the Land serve me; there will I accept them, and there will I require your Offerings, and the first Fruit of your Oblations, with all your Holy Things; I will accept you with your sweet Savour when I bring you out from the People, and gather ye out of the Countries wherein ye have been Scattered, and I will be Sanctified in you before the Heathen, Ezek. 20. 40, 41. From all these places we learn this Word of Instruction, That in all things we do in Order to God, or pertaining to Religion, as it is commonly named or understood; And so it is in going to such a Congregation or Assembly for Vvorship, unless God accepts thereof it all signifies nothing. I hate, I despise your Feast Days, and I will not smell into your Solemn Assemblies. Though ye Offer me Burnt-Offerings and your Meat-Offerings, I will not accept them, neither will I regard the Peace-Offerings of your Fat Beasts, Amos 5. 21, 22. VWhich yet he himself did Command and Inſtitute, and Man did then use them to please, atone, and be reconciled unto Almighty God. Now all those Sacrifices and Offerings under the Old Testament Dispensation, God did not desire them, Psal. 40. 6. but he did Inſtitute them as a Type of Christ: Which himself the substance and thing Typified being come, are now utterly ceased, finished and determined. Yet the Author to the Hebrews doth mention them as a Signification of that Gospel Worship, which the High Priest of our Profession Jesus Christ hath Instituted and doth require in these Days: So that by the same Interpretation, by the same Analogy and Reason of things, it may be certainly gathered and concluded that God will not accept of the several Acts and Parts of Worship now, outward Prayer, Praise, Hearing the Word (by the way as to that many now are for smooth things and deceits, Isa. 30. 10. but they do not come to hear right things, and the time now is that they will not bear Sound Doctrine) Baptism and the Lords Supper, I say that God will not accept of all, nor yet any



any of these (though they are his own Ordinances and Institutions. So that they should not be cast off neither, but only they should be Sanctified who use them) when it doth become the Sacrifice of Fools, the Sacrifice of Sinners and Transgressors. For they Provoke God and Deceive themselves (whereby they are Fools) when they keep up one with another; that is, when they Worship God, and yet continue in Sin and Transgression. The whole Scripture is full to the same purpose.

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a Cloud of Witnesses (what a vast Number of Texts of Scripture have we brought forth to prove and confirm the Point in hand, that it may appear to be a true saying and worthy of all Acceptation, as indeed it hath Acceptation with all such who are his Faithful Servants, that *God beareth not Sinners*) Let us therefore lay aside every weight, and the Sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with Patience the Race that is set before us. Many do imagine that that Sin which doth so easily beset us, is Pleasant, Convenient and Diverting; so that if it were laid aside, our Life would thereupon become Dull, Irksome and Tedious. But admitting it should be so, yet the Word of Exhortation speaks on this wise, *Let us run with Patience the Race that is set before us*. Indeed God doth give us Joy and Peace in Believing and Doing his Will, which doth recompence and Counterpoise for that: But it is the Mind of God that his Creatures should for some Set-times *Afflict their Souls*, Isa. 58. 3. There is a Commandment enjoying the same in some of the Books of Moses (the Reason whereof is Eternally Obligatory) as also we Read there, That upon the Solemn and Great Preparations to meet with the Lord, the Men were not to come near their Wives for three or four days. Allusive to which the Apostle Paul doth give direction and Counsel to the Husband and Wife, *Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give your selves unto Fasting and Prayer*, 1 Cor. 7. 5. From whence we learn That one Principal End and Necessary Part of Fasting is to Afflict ones Body, and to deny our selves those things which are lawful and allowed at other times. To *Aff Revenge*, 2 Cor. 7. 11. Indignation and Punishment upon ones self out of a Conscience and Knowledge that we have done something to deserve Gods Indignation and Punishment. And to this also 1 Cor. 11. 31, 32. hath some tendency and respect, for if we would Judge our selves, we should not be Judged: But when we are Judged, we are Chastened of the Lord, that we should not be Condemned with the World. So we Read in the Old Testament, Surely it is meet to be said unto God, *I have born Chastisement, I will not Offend any more*, Job 34. 31. And so we Read of a Mans Chastening his own Soul. All this is very Pertinent and Suitable to the Business of a Fast Day: As also

it shews that the Several and distant Places of Holy Scripture, do all in a most VVonderful manner meet together in this Center, which ye do well to attend unto, to see and observe it. A Center is but a very little and middle Point, even the least of all the Circumference about. And so the Center which all Scripture and the very many words contained therein, drives at and brings unto, is but in two words, which make but two Syllables. Ye may see this Center of Scripture in Psal. 4. 4. & 1 John 2. 1. It is only two short words but I am afraid it is more then many of ye here Present will Practise, it is SIN NOT, SIN NOT. For all Scripture, which signifies VVriting, from the beginning of *Genesis* to the End of the *Revelations*, is but an *Orderly Declaration* all along VVritten to the Inhabitants of the Earth, that they *Sin not*.

Indeed there is one Greater and Higher center, under which is Comprehended and Included, and that is but in two Words also; But it takes in and hath the other consequent unto and under it. That is SERVE GOD, SERVE GOD. This is the first and Great Commandment, or center of Scripture SERVE GOD. For the other is necessarily consequent and attendant to it. Serve God and Sin not, is the Law and the Prophets, the Gospel and the Apostles. It is the *Alpha* and *Omega*, the Beginning and End, and Middle and every Part of the Bible and Book of the Lord; for every Sentence, Word and Syllable, Letter, *Nota*; Yea the very Points and Stops, have every one of them a Relation and Tendency to this Great center, or Middle Point of the Compass and Circuit of many Words (*Serve God* and *Sin not*) as all the Rivers do arise out and Run again to the same Sea. *Ye that Love the Lord, hate Evil*. Psal. 97. 10. It is penned by way of Precept and Commandment, but it might have been delivered by way of Affirmation, They that Love the Lord, must necessarily Hate Evil: There being such an Incompatible Oppositeness and contrariety in his Holiness to the other. For they can no more stand with, or suffer one another then Light and Darknes. So it is here, he that doth indeed and really Serve God, must Sin not, or he must abstain from Sin. Herein is the Scripture fulfilled, *Whoever is Born of God doth not commit Sin; for his Seed Remaineth in him; and he cannot Sin, Because he is Born of God*. 1 John 3. 9. As long as the Seed of God is sensible in and Prevails in any one, he cannot commit Sin, but when any one falls into Sin, It is not that which is of God in him that doth fall into Sin, but it is somewhat of the Devil, the World, or the Flesh, or of his own Corrupt Nature. Now because that every one of us here in the Body are some Flesh and not all Spirit, thence it cometh to pass that the Just and Best of Men do fall sometimes and rise again, and recover out of them. But even those lesser Sins and Faults, which they are now and then overtaken with, are as so many Glogs and Weights,

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which hinder and retard them in running the VVay of Gods Commandments and the Race that is set before them. Each least Act of Sin or Tendencies to it, do Clip and Prefs down the Soul in its listings up towards the God above, the Father of Spirits. Conformable to that Advice of *Paul* aforementioned to Husband and VVife, *Peter* writeth unto them also, *Likewise ye Husbands dwell with them according to Knowledge, giving Honour unto the Wife as the Weaker Vessel, and as being Heirs together of the Grace of Life, that your Prayers be not hindered.* For the sake of this last only do I quote all the other, that your Prayers be not hindered. For *Paul* did Advise them after the aforesaid manner that their Prayers might be furthered. So I would Recommend unto ye a more General Use, Observation and Direction, how to Behave and Comport your selves that your Prayers be not hindered; but rather that your Prayers, and Alms, and Fasting, which should be all joyned together, may come in for a memorial before Gods, and be accepted by him. The only way and means for that and the End of all my Preaching amongst ye, is that ye Sin not. For though the Apostle saith, *If any Man Sin, wee have an Advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the Righteous.* VVhich is fitly put in, for if he were not Righteous he would be no more Proper to be an Advocate with the Father, then for a Man that is a Sinner to offer up Prayers unto God. But if we at any time fall under the spot of Gods Children, into a secret Fault, or a secret Sin, we sensibly find that our Prayers are hindered by it. I have known by my self in the time of my Unregenerate Condition, that presently after my Commission of a Great Sin, I could no more Pray unto God for the time then a Stone can of its self, without any ones Moving it, fly upwards. For like as a Nummedue's doth sometimes fall upon the outward-joynts, so I sensibly and experimentally sonnd, that like *Nabal my Heart died within me and became as a Stone.* It was as it were for that season dead, lumpish and heavy towards God. And so it is of those other infirmities and that Sin which doth so easily beset us, It doth render us unapt, and indispose us towards God and Good Things: This same is Sensible and Perceivable within our Hearts and Consciences. So that if we would not have our Prayers hindered, we must hearken unto and keop in Mind and Comply with the Exhortation which speaketh on this wise, *Lay aside every Weight and the Sin that doth so easily beset us. Stand in Awe and Sin not.*

Then it is that God doth accept of the Worshipper, when he is Sanctified in the Worshipper according to *Ezek. 20. 41.* I will accept you, and I will be Sanctified in you before the Heathen. When it is Written upon the Bells of the Horses, and so upon every Action of our Lives, Great or Small, In whatever we take in Hand, Holiness unto the Lord. To this Give all the Prophets Witness and all the Holy Men Moved by the Holy Ghost, who served the Lord in their Generation,

Generation, in whom he was well Pleased, and they were accepted with him. And so it was the very same which God himself spake unto Cain ( who offered as much Sacrifice in Quantity as his Brother did ) *If thou dost well, shalt thou not be accepted?* ( Mark that ) *and if thou dost not well, Sin lieth at the Door.* Gen. 4. 7. And whereas it is before said, *And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering; But to Cain and his offering he had not respect;* This was a Signification and declaration of his Mind and Pleasure, as to all the Future Worshippers of all the several Generations and Countreys of the Earth, down unto this day, and from henceforth unto the End of Time. Some Worshippers the Lord will have Respect unto and accept off, and other Worshippers the Lord will not have Respect unto nor yet accept off. Even according as they do VVell or Evil, as they Stand in aw and Sin not, so he accepts of them, and as they Sin, so he accepts them not. According as they *Worship him in Spirit and in Truth*, or as they Worship him only according to Form, or their own Imaginations and Inventions. This is the Sum of the things we have been speaking off, and the Conclusion of the whole matter; whereof I would have ye all to be admonished, and carry away with you in your Heads this Important Truth unto your own Homes: That Ye may Examine and Prove your selves severally, whether your VVorship and Religion from your Youth up, hath been and is such as God will accept off.

Saith Paul, *My manner of Life from my Youth was after the most straitest Sect of our Religion, I lived a Pharisee.* Acts 26. 4, 5. VVho was mighty Precise and Exact in outward things, and very Diligent and Constant in the observance thereof. Yet said a Greater then Paul, Except your Righteousness shall Exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, *Ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven* And if Paul had not went further, even to have believed and known, and obeyed the Truth as it is in Jesus, he had not been saved. However irksome it is to some to hear of as much it is certainly true as the same will be seen and found at the last Day. Many Men and VVomen will be damned for all their Religion. Those who have said *Lord, Lord*, Mat. 7. 21. throughout their Past Life; who have made many Prayers. *Woe* 1. 15. *Who have Eaten and drank in my Presence*, Luke 13. 26. Who have been constant Communicants at the Lords Supper, and have observed all the other Ordinances and Positive Duties; who have lived in the most straitest Sect of our Religion, however that be now called or outwardly named. If it should be asked which is the Straitest Sect now among us? Is it a Presbyterian, Anabaptist, Independent, Quaker? I cannot Readily tell. But this I believe that God hath his People amongst all of them. It is reckoned Invidious and ill Resented but to name them by their Distinguishing Names. But I do so to shew that the

the only lifting and ranking themselves amongst the most godly party or Religious People, or going to the Assemblies of the most straitest Sect of the Christian Religion (it is two Superlatives joyned together, which signifies the utmost preciseness and exactness) all this Will not bring to Life Eternal, unless there be a ceasing to Sin, and a doing the Will of God in all things; for the Name or Possession only will not save any one wharever.

This Doctrine, here all along insisted upon, may be apt to raise Doubts and Thoughts in the Minds of People. Some Carnal Hearts may Imagine (in *Jab's* Phrase) to Refrain Prayer before God; because they may Pray, and Pray, and never the near. Such are apt to say, It is almost as good never to be Religious, or to serve God at all, if a Man may do much therein, and yet Miscarry for all; or receive no good thereby. But this last is false, for God did Reward the Temporary Humiliation of *Ahab*, and so he doth make up unto People, every least good thing they do in order to him. It is no Argument against taking Physick in a desperate and dangerous disease, because that all who take it do not Recover thereof. It is certain, *That the Nation and Kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish*, Isa. 60. 12. which is true, as to every particular Man and Woman, without serving God and minding of Religion they will be certainly Condemned Cast away. And here again, if they do serve God and mind Religion, but they do it not enough to the saving of their Soul, that is their own Fault, and Negligence; and Evil Deserving, against which the Scripture, and the Word Preached (if they would come unto, and attend upon it) doth Warn and Caution them over and over. So much to the Ignorant and Ungodly Multitude: But now a word to Christians and the Real Servants of God.

Because we are not to make the *Heart of the Righteous Sad*, whom the Lord hath not made Sad, Ezek. 13. 22. And ye are required to Pray in Faith, and to Believe that God will hear ye in all things which ye ask according to his Will, if ye do his Commandments; and ye are to run your Christian Race not as uncertainly, 1 Cor. 9. 26. Therefore ye are to know that as is written, *This same Jesus which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into Heaven*. And as it is the best Argument for Comforting Troubled, Afflicted and Despairing Consciences, that we have the same Scriptures affirming God's willingness to pardon and forgive Repenting Sinners, as we have that he hath any Indignation or Displeasure against Sin; and that he will be Reconciled unto the World through Jesus Christ, all one as it is Revealed that he will Punish the World for their Evil, and the VVicked for their Iniquity, if they are within the Covenant, Conditions and Terms. So here it is in very like manner, That same VVord which speaks so abundantly much of Gods not  
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hearing Sinners, saith also, that there is a sort of People whom God will hear, even his Saints and Servants. All true Israelites are a People near unto him, Psal. 148. 14. *for what Nation is there so Great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things, we call upon him for?* Deut. 4. 7. He is Stiled, *O Thou that hearest Prayer*, Psal. 65. 2. *The Lord is nigh to all that call upon him* (Do you say so? VVhy, here comes presently the Limitation) *to all that call upon him in Truth. He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him. He also will hear their Cry and will save them*, Psal. 145. 19. And so the Scripture (the Revealed Mind of God) doth in Sundry Places and in Divers Manners affirm as much to this purpose, as it did on the other side, *That God heareth not Sinners*: But if any Man be a Worshipper of God, and doth his Will, him he heareth. That by this Immutable Word, wherein it is impossible for God to Lie, we might have strong Consolation who have fled for Refuge to lay hold on the Hope set before us. We have the greatest Encouragement that possibly can be to Pray always and not to Faint or Doubt in our Minds. That Men every where lift up Holy Hands without Wrath or Doubting. *These things have I written unto you that believe on the Name of the Son of God, that ye may know* (this is a word of assurance and insurance) *that ye have Eternal Life* (even whilst ye are in this short and dying Life here in the Body, but when this is ended, Eternal Life shall succeed and be grafted thereon) *And that ye may believe on the Son of God: And this is the Confidence* (Observe this most Comfortable and Encouraging Expression) *that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his Will, he heareth us*, 1 John 5. 13. 14. This is the very same in Words and Meaning with the latter part of our Text, *If a Man be a Worshipper of God, and doth his Will, him he heareth.*

## S E R M O N II.

**T**hen came the Word of the Lord of Hosts unto me, saying, *Speak unto all the People of the Land, and to the Priests, saying, When ye Fasted and Mourned in the Fifth and Seventh Month, even those Seventy Years, did ye at all Fast unto me, even to me?* Zecl. 7. 4, 5. In like manner it might be proper to admonish and put this same Question seriously and throughly to all the Preachers of England, to the Bishops, and Priests, and to the Preachers in the several Congregations throughout this Island, when ye Fasted and Mourned in the Fifth and Seventh Month (th's of August 9. 1693. is the Fast of the Sixth Month) even these Four or Five Years, *Did ye at all* Fast

*Faſt unto me, even to me.* One hath Teſtified and Publiſhed unto them, That it would be better and more pleaſing unto the Lord, if they did not Diſ-continue their Faſting, but did obſerve it in the VVinter Seafon conſtantly every Month thereof, as well as in the Summer half Year; for they ſhould not grudge, nor think any time too much to wait on, and ſeek the Lord, if peradventure he may be found and intreated. As he that is Spiritual, Judgeth all things ſo ſuch of ye as are his Saints and Servants may Judge, Conceive and Approve which would be moſt Excellent and Available: And each Man as he is Perſwaded and Dictated in his own Mind may alſo in the VVinter time ſet aſide and *Regard a Day unto the Lord*, to Faſt and Mourn for his own and the Sins of this Nation in General, although he is not outwardly obliged to the ſame by the Precept of Men. It ſeems by *Zech. 7. 3.* As if each Perſon did do it privately and ſeparately of his own accord, as appears from this manner of Speech, *Should I weep in the Fifth Month, ſeparating my ſelf as I have done theſe ſo many Years.* And as we are order our own Life and Converſation as near as ever we can to the Scripture Rule I have been directed from what I read in this Chapter of Faſting and Mourning in the Fifth and Seventh Month theſe Seventy Years. It hath been my Cuſtom and Manner for my own part to obſerve every Month (which is commonly on the firſt day of the Month, unleſs it be on the Lords Day, to Pray for the Lords Bleſſing on me all the Days following of that ſame Month, if I ſhould Live ſo long) a Day of Faſting and Humiliation. That in afflicting my Body in abſtaining from my neceſſary Food, I may be the more diſpoſed to Mourn for my Sins, as one that Mourneſh and is in Bitterneſs for his Firſt Born. This hath been my continued Practice for near theſe Seven Years laſt paſt, and by the Grace and Aſſiſtance of Almighty God, according as he ſhall preſerve my Life, Health and Strength, I do purpoſe to do the ſame during all the remaining Days of my Pilgrimage, whether it ſhould reach to Seventy Years, or whether the God (in whole hand my Breath is) ſhould cut me off before in the miſt of my Days, or in any other time of Life. Many of thoſe *Jews* were beloved of God for the Fathers ſake, as alſo he had his choice and elect Servants among them; for in that day, and according to the time that then was, they Worſhipped God according to his Will. And ſo we underſtand from this place that they were in no wiſe blamed or found fault with, but God ſeems rather to commend and be well pleaſed with their Weeping, Faſting and Mourning, and ſeparating themſelves as they did for ſo many, even Seventy Years. God doth only Caution them and direct them how to terminate their Weeping, Faſting and Mourning. When a thing is propoſed by way of Queſtion. It is to engage yet more the Attention of the Hearer, *When ye Faſted and Mourned in the Fifth and*



*Seventh Month, even those Seventy Years, did ye at all Fast to me, even to me? Was it to be eased and rid of that Bondage and Captivity ye were under, and would ye have done it to God if it was not for that? Why then did ye not the like, as he afterwards Speaks, Should ye not hear the Words which the Lord Cried by the former Prophets, when Jerusalem was Inhabited and in Prosperity, Verse 7. That Worship and Service of the Lord is most liked by him; as also it is Ingenious and Grateful in the Reasonable Creature to render it when he is most in Health and Prosperity; as also to perform that part of Worship (as Fasting is) which is Irksome and Unconth to our Nature, as well as well as what is smooth and easy. It may be, the Lords who had them in Captivity, held them strictly to Labour and Toil, and there might be such a mind in some of them as Pharoab Objected to their Fore-fathers the Israelites, Ye are idle, therefore they Cry, saying, Let us go and Sacrifice unto our God. And so some of these might be willing to get a Day in a Month for the pretence of Religion which either they would consume part of it in Idleness; or however it would be less wearisome than that hard Bondage, Captivity and Labour they should be otherwise in. Whatever it was, God saw somewhat in the Hearts of that People which was a by End. As appears by his Examining them so very strictly, and doubling his Question over and over, Did ye at all Fast to me, even to me? Nay, that By-end whatever it was, was not only a little mixture and ingredient, but it was the Principal and made up almost the whole, Did ye at all Fast to me?*

*Now Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our Learning and Admonition upon whom the Ends of the World are come. So this Great and Remarkable Place of Zechariah stands written for the Learning and Admonition of this Generation and Nation (yea of this present Assembly) that they should have no By-ends in the Worship and Service of God. Which By-ends should not so much as make up the least Mixture or Ingredient, much less the Principal, or almost the whole Compound. For God is a Jealous God, and he sees every least corner or crany (if I may so express it) of our Hearts. By those words of Weeping, Separating ones self, Fasting and Mourning, is an express and plain Reproof of all Merry-making, Company-keeping, or finding ones Pleasure on this Day as in Drunkenness, Play or Idleness. And yet how common a thing is this amongst Apprentices and Servants, and many other People in City and Country throughout this Nation? Who turn a Day of Fasting into a Day of Loytering, and a Day, which should be for Weeping and Mourning, into a Day of outward Mirth and Pastime. My Brethren these things ought not so to be.*

*If those Jews in Zech. 7. Did not otherwise spoil it by some sinister and by End (the Evil whereof they had mingled with this kind*

*of*



of Sacrifice ) they were so far in the Right Observance of it, as is there expressed by *weeping, Separating ones self, Fasting and Mourning*, for so the Lord himself describes the true Nature of a Fast by his Prophet *Joch*; *Therefore also now saith the Lord, Turn ye even to me* ( this answers exactly to that Place in *Zechariah Did ye at all Fast to me, even to me?* ) from whence and innumerable other Places, we see that all Scripture is of a Piece, and one Place answereth to another, as in *Water Face* answereth to *Face* ) *With all your Heart, and with Fasting, and with Weeping and with Mourning. And rent your Heart and not your Garments, and turn unto the Lord your God, Joel 2. 12, 13.* It is worth while to Read verse 1, 14, 15, 16, 17, as they are in the Bible. Those Jews we read of in *Zechariah*, were again in the Right for observing a Fast so many Years, even those seventy Years they were in Captivity For though indeed it is true according to what was before observed, that the Worship and Service of God is most Ingenious in Prosperity, yet therefore it should not be cast off and neglected in Adversity, in no wise. God forbid. For he ought to be served Diligently with all our Strength, and all that is within us, both in Prosperity and Adversity, even at all Times. Yea rather so much the more when we are in Affliction and Adversity. for the same Spirit, which spake by the Apostle *James*, directs us also, *is any Afflicted? let him Pray.* As also we sensibly find that we have a Natural Prompting to this; for upon any Great Trouble or Evil befalling us; or when it is without Visible Remedy or Redress out of it. We presently cry out and say, the Lord help us; which is the Language of Nature it self, as appears by Wicked and Ungodly People, as also sometimes it proceeds from Grace and the Knowledge of God, But here God is the God of Nature, and both Natural and Revealed Religion also Conspire in one, that in Adversity we should draw yet nearer and Pray more earnestly unto God. And as it is written, *In all their Affliction he was Afflicted and the Angel of his Presence saved them.* So in all the Affliction which God layes upon us, or suffers Satan to inflict on us, we should Afflict our selves. Like as a Sore is Launced and made Wider and Deeper for the Time in order to a Cure. So that for a Man to Fast and set aside a Day for to Afflict his Soul, is very congruous, Proper and Seasonable. I bring this to shew that as the Jews did observe a Monthly Fast for seventy Years. Because they were in Captivity: So there is the very same and alike Reason that *Thou* and *I*, and every one of us should keep a Monthly Fast all the Days of our Life, Because we are in Captivity also. How wilt thou make that out, for perhaps upon my affirming this unto ye, ye will be ready to answer, *We be Abrahams Seed, and were never in Bondage to any Man*, how sayest thou then? All we are in Captivity. Though thy self who writes this hast been in Prison five Times, (as indeed

indeed I have; three times in the dwelling Houses of People; for they had made that a Prison according to Jer. 37. 15. and once in a Common Prison, and another time in a Common House of Bondage and Captivity ) so that thou hast been in Captivity unto Men; yet God be thanked we never were in Prison in our Lives; and I thank God I have been there; for we should in every thing give thanks. But then further, though the Generality of the World are in the Slavery of Sin and in the Bondage of Corruption, yet we the Saints and Servants of God are not so; and how sayest thou then we are all in Captivity? Well for all I will make my words Good. I answer, It is well for those of ye that have Recovered and Got out of the Slavery, Dominion, Reigning and Service of Sin, that the obedience to the Gospel hath wrought and accomplished deliverance to the Captives. In the name of God see well to it, that ye keep your selves out of that Captivity and Thralldom. But is there not a Bondage of Corruption still in ye ( see Rom. 8. 21. ) from whence the Creature it self shall be at last delivered into the Glorious Liberty of the Sons of God. Though as yet it is not clearly, Perfectly and Utterly delivered out of it, nor will be as long as ye carry Flesh and Blood about ye. And we are all even the whole Creation ( though some are more and some less ) in Captivity under this Bondage of Corruption. But then in verse 23. Mention is made of the Redemption of the Body. which is a Phrase exactly alluding to the Redemption of Captives: So that as long as we are in the Body, we are in Captivity, Being tyed and manacled there by Chains and Fetters of Flesh. And we are as much in Prison in the Body as ever Poor Creature was, that was cubbed and locked up in a close Room, Dark Hole, or Chained to a Place. Somewhat hereof was signified by that Prayer of David when he was in the Cave, Bring my Soul out of Prison that I may Praise thy name. Psal. 142. 7. A Man so inspired and knowing of the things of God, as he was, Understood thus much, that one may Praise the name of God almost the same in a Cave as out of it, but he did apprehend yet higher and further as the other Saints and Servants of God do, that they shall better Praise him when they are out of the Body in the Highest Heavens, then ever they could do in the Prison of the Body on this Earth. In Truth we carry our Prison Houses and Prison about us, I mean the Body.

But there is yet a little more of this signified in Psal. 137. throughout: which I suppose was penned in that seventy Years of their Captivity. We read what an hankering and longing after Jerusalem and Sion those Poor Jewish Captives had. They always Remembered it and could not forget it. *Yea, we wept when we Remembered Sion.* I could almost weep my self, but my Bowels do Yearn when I think thoroughly thereof, or mention this same Story. But this very Psalm doth carry all along most excellent Instruction with it.

it. People that Read only the outward Letter cannot see any Instruction in it. But I will shew ye briefly how the Word of Instruction doth arise. For the Holy Ghost by leaving this little History on Record, doth teach and signifie as much to us, viz. *What Paul saith, Whilst we are at home in the Body, we are absent from the Lord.*) It was just now said, that we are all in Captivity here in the Body. And to follow the Paralel a little further, for the Scripture makes it out in sundry other Places, we are just or very near the same in Captivity here in the Body, as to Heaven our Native Country, for our Souls were Born or Created therein and came down from thence into this Body; as those *Jews* at *Babylon* were in Captivity from *Jerusalem* or *Sion* the Land of their Nativity. We are as much or rather more distant from Heaven, our Native Country, then they were distant at *Babylon* from *Judea* their Native Country. The Poet could say, *Nescio quæ natale Solum dulcedine cunctorum, Ducit & Immigrantes non finit esse sui.* The Poor Blacks or Negroes that are brought by force out of their Native Country, will Pine away for Grief, and Die or Famish themselves out of a fond belief and Persuasion, that then they shall go to their Native Country again. But whatever Sweetness, attractiveness which cannot be forgotten; *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not Remember thee, let my Tongue cleave to the Roof of my Mouth.* All these kinds of Affections are Implanted in them by the God of all Creatures of the Earth; and also they have a significancy and meaning and tendency to somewhat. From whence note by the way that we should give heed to the Workings and Movings of Nature within us. For if it is not Sinful or Corrupt but Purely Nature, as that Desire unto, and Remembrance of our Native Country is, there is somewhat of God in this. So it is here, Heaven is our Native Country; and there should be the like Sweetness, attractiveness, never forgetfulness, but continual Remembrance of it, as ever the most fond Person had to the Land of his Nativity, or as any of the *Jews* in Captivity had towards *Jerusalem* or *Sion*. Yea, we wept when we Remembred *Sion*. And so truly we have Reason to weep when we Remember and Consider, what an happy Condition our selves and all Mankind had been in if *Adam* had not Sinned, and if he had not done that Thing as to be thrust out of the Garden of *Eden*. And so, it was the Sin of the *Jews* which God had foretold and forewarned them often and enough off by his Servants and Prophets, which Sins brought them into Captivity. People can Mourn for Sin when they come to smart under the Punishment thereof. Or rather they do then more Mourn for the Punishment, then for the Sin itself. And yet alas! They do not at first avoid that Sin, which was the foregoing Cause or Occasion of that same Punishment. So it was with the *Jews*, when their own Sin, Iniquity and Transgression

tion had brought this Captivity upon them; and so it hath been and at this day is with the People of the several Generations and Countries in reference to the Temporal, but much more it will be so as to the Future and Eternal Punishments of God, which will be inflicted on them for that Course of Sin and Transgression they have committed here on this Earth. When they come to suffer for the same they will be Grieved and Howl for the Inconvenience and Pain, but not for the Sin, which is the greatest and only Evil; yea, worse than the Punishment it self. Thy Prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee, and they have not discovered thine Iniquity to turn away thy Captivity; but have seen for thee false Burthens and Causes of Banishment, Lam. 2. 14. As this was one Miscarriage of the Jews, and a leading Cause which brought them into the Seventy Years Captivity. So the very same will be the Lamentation at the last Day, Thy Bishops or Overseers, thy Preachers and Teachers in the several Congregations of the several Generations and Countries have seen vain and foolish things for thee; as that is one vain and foolish thing to set them on in a meer outward Profession of Godliness, or to hear a Form and Course of Words, without Regarding and Obeying the things signified thereby. And they have not discovered thine Iniquity to turn away thy Captivity; that is, the very top reigning Sin of all was left untouched: Or they were so blinded, Rom. 11. 7. as not to see and find it out what it was. To turn away thy Captivity. They have not used their utmost Care and Diligence to turn away and prevent People from the worst sort of Captivity, even that which Jude speaks of, the being Reserved in Chains of Darkness unto the Judgment of the Great Day; and to keep or warn them sufficiently from falling under that Threatning, which is now manifested under the Gospel, the Damnation of Hell. Alas! That is worse than Captivity under the Turk, or under the most Cruel and Ungodly Men upon Earth, and this kind of Captivity will be further off and at greater distance from God and Heaven, than is this present State of Captivity here in the Body and on this Earth.

We Read in *Psal. 137.* How the Jews behaved themselves in their Captivity at *Babylon*: Even so should we demean and behave our selves in this Captivity on the Earth. It was before said, How they sat down; yea, *They wept when they Remembered Zion*, and amongst many other memorable and observable Passages concerning it, the chief thing to be taken notice of, is, How they did not forget *Jerusalem*. *If I do not Remember thee, let my Tongue cleave to the Roof of my Mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my Chief Joy.* Even so in very like manner for these Seventy Years (for so is the Life of Man computed) We are in Captivity on this Earth, we should never forget, but always remember *Jerusalem* that is above; yea, we should

should prefer this Jerusalem above our Chief Joy; above all the Comforts and Refreshments, and Lawful Delights of this Life. All these indeed are lutable, and agreeable, and desirous by our Nature, but Heaven is above all.

Said Jesus Christ to his Disciples, *Notwithstanding in this Rejoyce not that the Spirits are subject unto you: But rather Rejoyce because your Names are Written in Heaven.* So this should be the only Measure and Standard of all our Rejoycing, *If I prefer not Jerusalem above my Chief Joy.* That is, I Rejoyce most at those things which tend, further and help me in the way to Heaven: Or my Chief Joy is in what gives me Assurance that my Name is Written in Heaven.

For this Cause, I declare freely; that as it is Written, *Rejoyce not because the Spirits are subject unto you; and as another saith, Rejoyce not over thy greatest Enemy being Dead, but Remember that we Die all.* So for my part, I cannot, nor yet do I Rejoyce upon Victory over Enemies, either of one side or the other, for they are our Fellow-Creatures, Partakers of the same Flesh and Blood, and are the Image and Workmanship of God as well as our selves. And I can no where find out of the Word of Life, or the Scriptures of Truth, how this Killing and Slaying either by Multitudes or Single Persons, doth any thing help, tend, or further to the bringing towards Heaven, nor yet doth it give assurance that their Names are Written in Heaven. But rather, These Destructions do proceed from beneath; for they spring up from that Source and Fountain below, even the *Angel of the Bottomless Pit*, whose Name in the Hebrew Tongue is *Abaddon*, but in the Greek Tongue hath his Name *Apollyon*, Rev. 9. 11. which in our English Tongue signifies a *Destroyer*, and so is the Marginal Reading there; *That is to say, A Destroyer.* But at the last Day it shall be returned upon him, and said, *O thou Enemy, Destructions are come to a perpetual end*, Psal. 9. 6. But Jesus Christ doth differ from all the Kings and Rulers of the Earth, for he was no outward Fighter. And so when he comes to Reign Universally over them all, *When all Kings shall fall down before him, and all Nations shall serve him; which is not yet fulfilled at this Day:* No not so much as in Christendom; for they do only own his Name, but they do not obey his Doctrine. But when he shall have put down all Rule, and all Authority and Power, 1 Cor. 15. 24. When God and Christ shall be Exalted alone in that Day; when there shall one King over all the Earth, and his Name One, Then also shall be fulfilled and found true, *In his Days shall the Righteous Flourish, and abundance of Peace so long as the Moon endureth. He shall spare the Poor and Needy, and shall save the Souls of the Needy. He shall redeem their Soul from Decets and Violence, and precious shall their Blood be in his sight*, Psal. 72. 7.

13, 14. *Precious shall the Blood of his People be in his sight.* This is contrary unto, and vastly different from the Shedding and Spilling of Blood at all Rates. In making known this unto ye, I do Preach *Jesus Christ*, and shew unto you what is the Christ-like Nature; which is all *Dove*, and not *Hawk*, which is Holy, Harmless, Inoffensive, Meek and Gentle as a *Lamb*.

To return again, We should always bear in mind this thing, *Of preferring Jerusalem above my Chief Joy*, even above our Meals and Feasts, above our Wife or Children, Houses, Riches, Goods, or those Delights of the Mind, as are had by Learning and Knowledge. Nay, whatever is Good, Pleasant or Desirable in this World; yet still and all along, *Jerusalem is to be preferred above my Chief Joy*. As Paul could, and did say, *Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and I do count them but dung that I may win Christ*. So all things here are but loss and dung, or but Earth, unless they be made and turned into the Vessels of the Sanctuary. I mean, unless they are so managed as to serve us in our Ministration, and forward us in the way to Heaven. And so all along we are to give the Preeminence in our Hearts and Affections to the things that are above, *To prefer Jerusalem above my Chief Joy*. To be always mindful of, and endeavouring after it, Remember this one good Lesson of Instruction. In all things thou seest or puttest thine hand unto; or whatever thou enjoyest, be sure to *prefer Jerusalem* (that is, Heaven) *above thy Chief Joy*.

But here ye may be apt to say, These are good and useful Truths in their kind, But what are they to the Text? *If any Man be a Worshipper of God, and doth his Will, him he heareth*. They do indeed belong to our Text, though it be somewhat at a remoter distance. For the drift of our foregoing Discourse is on this wise, It hath been shewed that we are in Captivity on this Earth, and kept from Heaven our Home, all one as the *Jews* were in Captivity at *Babylon*, and they were kept from *Jerusalem* their Native Country. There is the very same Reason why we should keep a Fast once every Month during these Seventy Years of our Captivity on this Earth (although the *Precept of Men* doth not enjoyn it) all one as they kept a Monthly Fast during those many Years, even Seventy Years, they were in Captivity at *Babylon*. But further it is Pertinent to the Text, for Fasting is a part of the Worship of God; and it hath been here so stated and shewed out of his Revealed Word, which is his Revealed Will, that it may become a Worship of God according to his Will, or a Worshipping of God and doing his Will, which is the very words of our Text. The principal End of Fasting, is to seek the Lord yet more Solemnly and

and Earnestly, if peradventure he may be found and entreated; and when to this Fasting there is annexed a VVorshipping of God and doing his VVill; or the way is shewed how we may Fast according to his VVill; all this is a threefold Cord, if I may so express it, to draw God nearer to us, and us nearer to God. We Read in the inspired Writings of Bringing down Christ from above.

*If any Man be a worshipper of God, and doth his will, him he heareth.* This is a Pithy Saying; for herein is a great deal of matter comprehended in a very few words. It is a Scripture which is as much to be observed and taken notice of as any other in the whole Bible; as indeed there is none in that Book, but what very well deserves the Knowledge and Observation of Man. For the end of all Religion and of all the VVorship and Service of God is for his Glory and for our own Salvation, Both which do depend meerly and only upon God's acceptance thereof, which is signified by the Phrase in our Text, *Him he heareth.* For unless God doth hear, it is all as *VVords spoken in the Air*, 1 Cor. 14. 9. and so it is of all the Religion and VVorship in the VVorld unless God doth accept thereof, What doth it signifie? If one should go to his Parish Church all his days: Another goeth to such a Congregation, called by such a Name; and a third Person goes to another kind of Congregation, called by another Name, as there is hardly any City throughout this Nation, or but few great Considerable Market Towns but hath four or Five sorts of Worship in it, distinguished by so many several Names; I say of all, after People have been Members or Frequenters of such a Way, if God should not accept thereof at the last day, what would it avail, signifie or stand them in stead? Truly nothing at all.

It may be gathered and applied from *John 4. 20, 21, 22, 23, 24.* That *Salvation is not Confined and Limited to one sort only amongst the Reformed Religion.* For amongst them the difference is only in lesser things, and not in the weightier matters of the Law. And God hath his People, I mean, the Universally Good and Upright in each of them. Those that be sincere and without Offence, will be accepted in the Day of Christ. *Sincerity* signifies what is pure, without any mixture or by-ends, such as are afore-mentioned. But the surest way for God to accept of our Worship, is to see well to it, that the same be Spiritual and True. *Spiritual*: To this the use of all Images and Pictures therein is as contrary as Darknes is unto Light. As also Formal Worship is different from, and opposite unto Spiritual Worship. So likewise outside Worship is different from Spiritual Worship, for this is a thing within. Spiritual VVorship is the work of the Soul, but outside VVorship is only the Presence of the Body, or the several Motions and Inclinations thereof. We are expressly foretold, *That Bodily Exercise Profiteth little but*



*Godliness is Profitable unto all things.* This Godliness is the Substantial Vital and Inward Part: The other is but the Husk or Shell, Our Worship must not be only Spiritual, but also it must be True, that is, according to the *Word of Truth*, which is the Scriptures, which Rejects all Idolatry, Superstition, and Error, and Will-worship, or by the *Precept of Men*, Isa. 29. 13. whereof again the Scripture is the alone Rule and Touch-stone. *The true Worshipers shall Worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth; for the Father seeketh such to Worship him.* And if he seeketh such to worship him, certainly he is well pleased with, will accept of, and hear them. *God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in Spirit and in Truth.* This great Scripture doth fall in and is the same in signification with that of our Text. However it proves and confirms the Truth thereof. *If any man be a worshipper of God, and doth his will, him he heareth.* For to worship him in Spirit and in Truth is a doing his will, or at least it is a worship according to his will, in as much as it is plainly Revealed, That he seeketh such to worship him. Again there be two other express places which confirm our Text, almost in very words, but to the same Sense. *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his Commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight;* (which keeping of his Commandments and doing those things that are pleasing in his sight, is the very same with doing his will.) *And this is the Confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.* It is agreed on all hands, that Prayer here expressed by the word, *Asking*, is in very deed the worship of God; and here is the Promise of God's hearing us, the very words of our Text, *When we ask any thing according to his will;* which is the very same with worshipping of him, and doing his will, or rather worshipping of him according to his will. *But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is Godly for himself: The Lord will hear when I call unto him,* Psal. 4. 3. said David, who did his will and pleasure, as every Godly Man doth. For to be Godly, doth import the God-like Nature to be wrought and formed in us; and this God-like Nature doth all things well pleasing in his sight, or the things according to his will, or the will of God it self.

Thus having Proved, Confirmed and Established our Text by the Mouth of two or three Witnesses; as indeed a very great deal of Scripture, yea, the Bent and Tendency of the whole doth illustrate and demonstrate the same. Proceed we now to speak in few words, what is this doing the will of God.

Here is a great deal in this. *And as to this, say not in thine Heart who shall Ascend into Heaven?* That is, to know what is the mind and will of God who Inhabits there. Why, Christ who came down from Heaven from out of the Bosome of the Father, he hath made known



known and declared unto Men what is the Will of God, as you may Read abundantly thereof in the Gospel. But what saith it further? *The Word is nigh thee, even in thy Mouth and in thy Heart*, that is, *the Word of Faith which we Preach*. Which same Word doth shew, acquaint and make known unto us, what is the will of the most High God. When Jesus Christ taught his Disciples to Pray, he put in that Petition, *Thy Will be done as in Heaven, so in Earth*. Luke 11. 2. It is thereby implied as if the Will of God was not so done in Earth, as it is in Heaven; for we Pray for things which are not, and so would have them be. Indeed it is too true and evident, that ever since the Creation of Man upon the Earth, and during all the while that the Generations are passing through unto this Day (wherein Iniquity doth abound and the Love of many wax Cold) the Will of God hath not been so done in Earth as it is in Heaven. For here on this Earth a great deal of Sin hath been committed, yea a course of Sin and Transgression hath gone on (*Jeremiah saith, their course is Evil*) *We Read of a walking according to the course of this World, according to the Prince of the Power of the Air, the Spirit that now worketh in the Children of Disobedience*. Eph. 2. 2. We Read also of the Fashion of this World. *For all that is in the World, the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life, is not of the Father, but is of the World*. And so all here named is not the Will of God, nor yet according to the Will of God, but indeed contrary to the Will of God. As the same *John* doth give us to Understand, that the Will of God is distinct, and another thing from them all according as we Read in the verse next Immediately following. *And the World passeth away and the Lust thereof, but he that doeth the Will of God, abideth for ever*. Whereby is shewn forth that the doing the Will of God is a getting clear from the Lust of the Flesh, *the Lust of the Eyes and Pride of Life*. That is not the Will of God, which is now done on this Earth by the Multitude, or by the chief and Rich People thereof; but that is the Will of God which ought to be done by all People, and we are to Pray and Endeavour that it may be done by them; but as yet it is not done by them. I say again, this is not the Will of God, Which is Publickly done on this Earth. For it is a Stage of Sin and Confusion, and it is the Place where Satans Seat is; but that is the Will of God which is according to his revealed and written Word. The Mind, and VVord and Word of God is all near the same. But now hearken what the VVord of God saith somewhat pertaining to this matter, *I know thy VVorks, and where thou dwellest; even where Satans seat is; and thou holdest fast my name and hast not denied my Faith: Even in those Days, wherein Antipas was my Faithful Martyr, who was Slain among you, where Satan dwelleth*. Rev. 2. 13. This is the Condition of the People of God on this Earth, for they dwell among

among Sinners and the People of the VWorld where Satans Seat is; and yet amidst them they are not infected and defiled with their Corruption and Manners. For the Servants and Children of God hold fast his Name and do not deny his Faith; whereas the People of the VWorld and the Sinners do also, hold fast the Name of God and of Christ; for they will talk of them and say, Lord, Lord: But they deny his Faith, *Not Purifying their own Hearts by Faith*, nor yet do themselves live accordingly and comply with what a real Faith of the things of God doth require. It was the more Remarkable of the Servants and Children of God, that they should hold fast his Name and not deny his Faith, even in those days wherein *Antipas was a Faithful Martyr*. For it is not altogether so much to do it, when the Churches have Rest and there is no Persecution at all. But here is the Faith and Patience of the Saints, when People do hazard and jeopard their lives for their Faiths sake. VWhen they see others before them, Killed and Slain for the Sake of the same Faith, as *Antipas* here was, that is, on this Earth where Satan dwelleth. But it seems he had so much Power here as to effect it, for the Devil hath sometimes Power to kill the VWitnesses. That of Persecution is the worst sort of Murder, which certainly is not according to the VWill of God, but contrary unto his Commandment. Nevertheless sometimes God is pleased to suffer it. For as he did suffer the manners of the *Israelites* forty Years in the VWilderness, so he suffers all the Sin and VVickedness that is done in the VWorld. For whereas it is commonly said, that VWhatever is done here on the Earth is the VWill of God; for if it was not the VWill of God it could not be done; because he giveth to every thing Life, Breath, and Power to do whaever it doth; which he can take away or hinder and then it cannot be done. All this is true; and yet God is not the Author, nor yet the Actor of any Sin or Evil. For here some have Rightly put a difference (as it is a great Part of the Ministerial Office to put a difference, or shew a difference Ezek. 22. 26.) between the twofold VWill of God, A will of God in which he is well pleased, and that is only in Acts of Good and Obedience that are done by his Creatures. The other is barely a will of Permission, whereby to Prove and Try them he suffers and lets them do as they will. It is certain that where God gives a Command, *Thou shalt not follow a Multitude to do Evil*. Exod. 23. 2. Thereby it is supposed that such a thing is Possible for a Multitude to do Evil; and again it too often happens in this Corrupt VWorld that the Multitude doth Evil. For saith the Truth it self who knew all things, *Broad is the VWay and VWide is the Gate that leadeth to Destruction*. And many (that is, the Multitude) *there be who go in thereat*. And again it is certain that when a Multitude do Evil, this is not the doing the VWill of God, that VWill in which he is well pleased. For thou art of Purer Eyes than

*then to behold Evil and cause not looke on Iniquity. Hab. 1. 13. So as to Approve and be Well pleased therewith. For God cannot be tempted with Evil, neither tempteth he any Man; but every Man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own Lust and enticed. And so in like manner it may be truly reasoned, when any Man doth Sin or Evil, then he is drawn away of his own Lust, and he doth his own will, and not the Will of God. For the Will of God (like his Commandment) is Holy, just and Good; and as long as any Man doth that which is Holy, just and Good, Lawful and Right, he doth the Will of God. But if it be Unholy, Unrighteous, Evil, Unlawful and Wrong, there either he doth his own or the will of Men, yea, the will of the Devil. Little Children let no Man Deceive you: He that doth Righteousness, is Righteous even as he is Righteous. He that committeth Sin is of the Devil. For the Devil Sinneth from the Beginning. For this Reason in both parts of our Text, Sinning and Doing the Will of God is quite Opposite and contrary one to the other: God Heareth not Sinners, but if any Man be a Worshipper of God and doth his Will him he heareth.*

Nothing is a more certain Truth that if the thing be Sin, Iniquity or Transgression, it is not the Will of God. And so all those Places which were formerly alledged to Prove and Confirm that God beareth not Sinners, do by Consequence Prove and Confirm the Point in hand, That Sinners do not the Will of God.

If you ask who these Sinners are? It is answered, By the Law and by the Gospel is the Knowledge of Sin, and the doing any thing contrary, against, or different from the Commandment and Rule therein contained, that is Sin. For Sin is the Transgression of the Law. As also they do hereby give an implied Attestation that if such did the will of God he would hear them. Because your Iniquities have Separated between you, and your God, and your Sins have hid his Face from you that he will not hear. 'Tis Sin only which makes that vast chasm and wide difference between God and the Creature. Because we have Transgressed and Rebelled, and thou hast not Pardoned, therefore it follows, Thou hast covered thy self with a cloud that our Prayer should not pass through. Lam. 3. 43. 44.

The will of God is perfectly Consonant and Agreeable to his Word. It speaks exactly according to the Law and the Testimony. And further we may know the will of God by the Spirit which he hath given us. And when he was demanded of the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God should come. He answered them and said, the Kingdom of God cometh not by observation; or as it is in the Marginal Reading there, with outward shew. Neither shall they say, Lo here, or Lo there; for behold the Kingdom of God is within you. I have all along much thought on this, when I have heard of a great hurly burly among the Nations; and there hath been an outward shew of a

Great

Great appearance of a Multitude of Men, Horses and VVarriours; Verily I have concluded, that there is little or nothing of God or of Christ in all this ( however false Prophets, who were always for pleasing the Rich and Mighty People have spoken otherwise ) and I have grounded that my Persuasion upon these very words of Christ himself, *the Kingdom of God cometh not with outward shew, but the Kingdom of God is within you.* And indeed if upon those great and extraordinary changes, which sometimes happen in the World, there was a change also in the Hearts of Men; If there was a putting away the Fashions and Customs of the World ( which the Spirit of God saith by *Jeremiah* are vain ) If there was an Universal Revolution and Turning over in all People from the Highest to the Lowest to Newness of Life; if there was a Reformation in Manners; then possibly some good thing might be expected: But if it be only a Removal from out of one Sin into another, from Profanels into Hypocisies; *If they proceed from Evil to Evil, and they know not mee saith the Lord.* Jer. 9. 3. If in the words of *Paul*, *Thou that abhorrest Idols, dost thou commit Sacriledge?* Rom. 2. 22. So it is, If out of on abhorrence of such an Idolatry, superstition and false Way, thou committest Robbery, Injustice, Oppression or any other Sin or Evil; If out of a Zeal ( whither it be Pretended or Real ) for the more keeping of one Commandment they Break and Transgress another, and it may be two or three, or more, truly no Great Good can come or arise out of all this. For God is not Glorified hereby, nor yet is it the doing his Will. Marke I beseech ye, that I do not speak this out of mine one head, but his VVord the Scripture saith the same. *He is the Rock, his Works are Perfect; for all his VVays are Judgement: A God of Truth and without Iniquity, Just and Right is he.* Deut. 32. 4. *The Lord is Righteous in all his VVays. And Holy in all his VVorks.* Psal. 145. 17. So that if either the thing be Unrighteous or Unholy; or mixed with Iniquity or falsehood, then it ceases to be the Work or Way of God. *Will ye speak VVickedly for God and deceitfully for him?* Job. 13. 7. There is no need of it at all. There is no necessity for any Person whatever to Sin. But such only is the manner of Fools, Sinners and Hypocrites to proceed from Evil to Evil. From one wrong extream to another. Who make Perpetual Shipwracks of Faith and a Good Conscience upon the Rocks or Sands of one Sin or another. Whereas here Godly discretion and uprightness would keep on in the Good middle Way between those dangers and extreams even by keeping on in the Way of the Commandments, and by having Respect unto all Gods Statutes without turning aside to the right hand or to the left according as the Scripture Rule and Direction herein is. *The VVay of the just is Uprightness. Thou most Upright dost weigh the Path of the just.* Isa. 26. 7.

*As when the Lord passed by, and a Great and strong Wind rent the Mountains and brake in Pieces the Rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the Wind; and after the Wind an Earth-quake, but the Lord was not in the Earth-quake; and after the Earth-quake a Fire; but the Lord was not in the Fire; and after the Fire a still small Voice.* 1 Kings 19. 11, 12. In which it seems the Lord spake unto *Elijah*. So it hath been and is at this very Day, God doth manifest and make known himself unto his Servants and Creatures, not in things which carry a great outward appearance, or which seem terrible or big, or in the rushing of Nations. But he doth make known himself and his will to each Man and Woman singly and severally, in the still Voice of his Word and Spirit; and his Servant doth accordingly wait and consult there, both from the Bible and also from the VVord and Spirit within. *I will bear what God the Lord will speak.* Psal. 85. 8. *I will stand upon my Watch and set me upon the Tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall Answer when I am reprov- ed.* Hab. 2. 1. *For God speaketh once yea twice; yet man perceiveth it not. In a Dream in a Vision of the Night, when deep sleep falleth upon Men, In slumberings upon the Bed.* Job 3 14, 15. And so he doth in our walkings up and down, whilst we are in our closet or retirement; yea, oftentimes in the Place of his VVorship and hearing his word. *For as while Peter yet spake those Words the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the Word.* Acts 10. 44. So God doth usually now adays Bless his own Ordinance, and then manifest himself otherwise to his People and Servants then he doth to the World. He makes known his Will unto his Children, by sending his Spirit into their Hearts, and by putting silent thoughts of good into his Soul at the very time whilst they are hearing the word, which is a great Encouragement to People to come unto the Place of hearing. For the Hour is coming and will shortly be, wherein it shall be found that each Manifestation of God unto the Creature, the Law which proceeded out of his Mouth, and was conveyed into the Heart of the Creature, will be found better then Thousands of Gold and Silver.

Upon Fasting Days ( which one calls Soul Fasting Days ) God doth then commonly more make known his VVill. I my self upon those Days have Received Direction from God amidst doubts and difficulties; I have Perceived a sensible Return and Answer to Prayer, which hath been put up then ( Blessed be his most Holy Name for it ) for as we Read concerning those *Nazarites* of Old who were not to drink wine nor strong drink at all, Because they were given up more nearly to the Lord, and from what *Jude* speaks, *These are sensual, not having the Spirit*; VVe learn hence that to fit one the more for receiving of the Spirit ( which teacheth and makes known the VVill of God ) we should Fast often, and also be exceeding Temperate and Sober at all Times. *As when Jonathan tasted but a drop of*

*Honey his Eyes were Enlightened.* So I have several times observed as to my self, that when I have drank but a spoonfull or single draught of wine or strong drink, Immediately thereupon I have found the Influences of God, and the sence of Divine, Spiritual and Heavenly things to be damped, choaked and stifled for the time whereupon I conclude it is the will of and most pleasing to the Lord that I should drink little or no strong drink or wine, which would be more Lawfull unto other Labouring Men, and I would willingly Obey this more and more. For God would more manifest himself and make known his will unto our Souls, and we should perceive more Communications and Influences from him if these four things especially did not hinder. The three last are comprehended under the first, for they are Sins also. 1<sup>st</sup> Sin, 2<sup>ly</sup> sensuality or fulness of Bread, 3<sup>ly</sup> Earthly-Mindedness, and the being cumbred about many things; for as it is said, when the Earth comes exactly between the Sun and the Moon, then there is an Eclipse of the Moon; so the Soul is Eclipsed, or Darknes and Obscurity comes over the Soul, when this Earth doth interpose between God and our Minds. A fourth hindrance to the Receiving the things of the Spirit, is keeping too much Company, especially with the People of the VWorld. *They are of the World, therefore speake they of the World*; and you had as good talk with a deaf Man, as talk with them about any thing else. Perhaps some of them may let fall a word about God in a general way, as of the Fear of God and keeping his Commandments; which any one can talk off by rote. But they are Strangers to Heart and inward VVork, to serious and through Godliness, to the Power and Life thereof; and by their society a Man doth rather receive diminution and lessening of his own Zeal and Fervency, then any Benefit, Advantage or Furtherance in the ways of God. But by that Phrase we so often meet with in Scripture, of separating from our Brethren and coming out from among them, as we Read in *Habakkuk*, of standing upon the *Wat b Tower*, and then it is written *Blessed is the Man whom thou choosdest and causest to approach unto thee.* Psal. 65. 4. And as we Read how that *Moses* and *Elijah* were forty days in the Mount of God, and the other Prophets would sometimes retire into the Wilderness or by a River side; and then it being written, *Commune with your own Heart upon your Bed and be still, Selah.* All these are lessons and Instructions to us, that we should sometimes retire from the World and the Company thereof to get all alone, for then it is that we have most of God with us. And then it is, *he hath shewed us what he doth require of us.* Micah. 6. 8. What is his will and what he would have us to do. *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Acts 9. 6. And it is to be taken for a certain Rule, that what God makes known and discovers in the Heart and Conscience and Stirs and Prompts the Creature to do the same, as it is agreeable to his written

written Word and Revelation, such as his Saints and Servants did of old time, and is Lawful and Right, this is as much the call and will of God as if we outwardly heard his Voice Speaking from Heaven, which no Man doth, and we Sin and Disobey greatly if we do not this Will, and go forth according as he calls us, for this is the Use and Application of this whole Sermon. It is two fold,

The first Use is of Command and Direction.

The second Use is of Consolation and Assurance.

The first Use of Command and Direction is grounded upon those words of our Saviour Jesus Christ, *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.* As soon as ever ye know the will of God he expects that ye should do it, all one as a Servant is to know, receive and do the will of his Master; as also they should be ready at all times to know and receive his will, and not go frowardly on in the way of their Heart; for God knows this all one as if it was expressed forth in outward word and action. And that they should *turn at his Reproof*; which Reproof, though it is secret and inward, a Disobedience here is known unto him, all one as what Transgression is open and manifest in the sight of Men. It is Observable how that command runs, *Turn you at my Reproof*; *Behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you*; *I will make known my words unto you*, Prov. 1. 23. According as the Soul is obedient and doing, God gives more Grace and Knowledge, he hath more Favour and Loving-Kindness towards that Soul even now; and he will give it a more full and greater Reward hereafter. So it is here where the Soul doth turn at his Reproof there succeeds and follows, *I will pour out my Spirit unto you*, *I will make known my words unto you*. Which Spirit and Words teach us what is the will of God: And here the consequent should be also, That as God doth pour out his Spirit, and make known his VVords, Men and VVomen should receive those his VVords, obey the Dictates of his Spirit, and do according to the same VVords. The whole Body of Divinity doth center upon this thing of Practice, We Read a Thousand, yea, ten Thousand times throughout the Book of the Lord of doing his Commandments, of walking in and keeping them, and the like. *Now these are the Commandments, the Statutes, and the Judgments, which the Lord your God Commanded to Teach you, that ye might do them*, Deut. 6. 1. Every Chapter, and every Verse; yea, every Sentence, VVord and Tittle hath a Relation all to this, That Man may obey God and do his will. If any man seem to be Religious, and yet do not confirm all the words of God's Law to do them, Deut. 27. 26. Nor yet do they the will of God, That Man or Womans Religion is vain. Hear and Tremble at this VVord all ye meer outward VVorshippers, Partial and Nominal Christians; for ye will Perish and be Damned, notwithstanding ye do some things in order to God and to Religion.

But to such and such only who are so happy as to know these things and do them. Our second use doth speak Consolation and Assurance. How so? Such who VVorship God, and do his will, God hears; which is all that Creatures can desire on this side of Heaven; and which will certainly and infallibly bring them to Heaven. *Happy art thou, O Israel; Who is like unto thee? O People saved by the Lord, the Shield of thy Help, and who is the Sword of thy Excellency, Deut. 33. 29. "He also Exalteth the Horn of his People, the Praise of all his Saints; even of the Children of Israel, a People near unto him, Psal. 148. 14.* All this is to be Understood of the Real and not of the Nuncupative Israel. *For what Nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for?* Here I might Transcribe the whole Scripture; for it is exceeding full to this purpose: Yea, it is ten times more full and exprels concerning God's hearing the Prayer of his Servants and Children, his Elect and People, then it is on the other hand, that he doth not hear Sinners; as to which there hath been here abundantly much alledged. But to this of Hearing the Prayers of his Servants pertaineth the Adoption, the Covenants and the Promises; which is such a Threofold Cord that can no more be broken than it is possible for any mortal Man to pluck the Sun out of the Firmament; or that the Heaven and Earth and the whole Fabrick of things contained therein, should be dissolved and come to nothing at this moment of my writing this. Whereas they been from the days of old, and they are upheld at this present time by the Word of his Power; and they will never be otherwise dissolved than to bring in, and make way for another more abiding; even an Eternal and Irreverfible State of things. As sure as God is, he is True, so that all which is Spoken and Written in his Word, will be fulfilled: And the same Word which speaks of the Rejection and Casting off of some of Mankind, doth speak of the Election and Calling of others. The same Word which speaks of the Condemnation of Many, doth speak of the Salvation of another sort. As there is an *Everlasting Punishment prepared for the Devil and his Angels*, for Sinners and Hypocrites: So *there remaineth a Rest to the People of God*; and such God hears at this present time in all things, which are lawful, good and Profitable for them. Nothing is so sure as that Christ shall see the Travel of his Soul and be Satisfied, Isa. 53. 11. He hath had his People all along (though God knows in some Generations they were but few) He hath now, and will have his People on Earth, and he will have them in Heaven also. *Father I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my Glory which thou hast given me.* For where the Head is, there also must the Members be. There are many such Precious Promises and Truths in the two foregoing Chapters, and



and indeed throughout the whole Gospel of Christ, which hath brought Life and Immortality to Light. Wherefore comfort ye one another with these words:

The End of all our Preaching and Prayer, the Gathering and Assembling of our selves together upon the Lord's Day, or upon our Solemn Fast Day, is that ye and my self do use diligence, that since there is a Number of our Fellow-Creatures, Partakers of the same Flesh and Blood allotted unto Perdition, and another Number ordained to Eternal Life, that thou and I and the others, even all the *Israel* of God, may be found amongst them at the last day, who shall believe and serve God to the saving of our Souls. *Except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of God.* And except your Religion doth exceed the Religion of the Multitude and Generality of the People of the VWorld (as by the way this is some Mark that it doth, when ye wait upon God in hearing his Word, whilst others are at their Labour, Trade, Company, Idleness, or in an Ale house) It will not be a Religion to the saving of your Souls. But if it doth indeed exceed that Religion by being more Inward, Spiritual, and Constant, then it will avail to that good End, even to the saving of your Souls.

And may God hear us (who are his People) *in the Day of Trouble*, as it hath been a Day of Distress, and VVar among the Nations, which we are to lay to Heart, they being our Fellow-Creatures. But the day of Sickness and Death is the greatest Day of Trouble; and then May the Name of the God of *Israel* defend us. Send us help from thy Sanctuary, and strengthen us out of Zion. Remember all our Offerings, and accept our Burnt-Sacrifices, Selah. Grant us according to our own Heart, and fulfil all thy Counsel. *We will rejoyce in thy Salvation, and in the Name of our God we will set up our Banners. The Lord fulfil all thy Petitions.* That the Lord may hear and accept of all things we have done throughout our fore-going Life, which will set us in Heaven, where we shall rejoyce in his Salvation, and in the Name of our God set up our Banners, Let us to our worship of God annex the doing his will; Let us worship him according to his will; and not only worship him, but do his will also: For such God heareth; and such, and such only he will save.

Written by Richard Stafford, and  
Preached in the Country on two Se-  
veral and National Fast-Days.

*Advertisement.*

*In Page 5. Line 18. Read these following Words.*

**A**S for such a Peace which is made upon any other Terms then that of Righteousness: It is like a Sore Superficially and Outwardly Cured and Skinned over; which in process of time will be apt to break out again. But when it shall be according to the Directions and Prescriptions of God's Word, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the *Prince of Peace*, then it will be Sound throughout, Firm and Durable, according to what is written, *In his Days shall the Righteous Flourish: and abundance of Peace so long as the Moon endureth*, Psal. 72. 7. *Of the Increase of his Government and Peace there shall be no end*, Isa. 9. 7.

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*London, Printed in the Year 1697. And are to Sold unto such, who will Receive the Truth in the Love thereof.*